

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1094

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1286

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, TP

SUBJ: PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS IN SAO TOME; CONVERSATION WITH
PRESIDENT DA COSTA

1. IN RATHER IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY, I PRESENTED CREDENTIALS TO
PRES DA COSTA OF GSTP ON MAY 26. FOLLOWING NATIONAL ANTHEMS, REVIEW
OF TROOPS AND MARCH-PAST, I ENTERED PALACE WHERE PRESIDENT WAS
WAITING TO RECEIVE ME FLANKED BY SIX MINISTERS. I THEN READ RE-
MARKS IN FRENCH (STATE 91223) AND PRESENTED CREDENTIALS. PRESIDENT
RESPONDED BY READING REMARKS IN PORTUGUESE WHICH BEING REPORTED
SEPTEL.

2. WITH FORMAL CEREMONY CONCLUDED, PRESIDENT INVITED ME FOR
PRIVATE CHAT AT WHICH ONLY OTHER PERSON PRESENT WAS FONMIN D'ALVA.
CONVERSATION LASTED SOME 40 MINUTES WHICH I UNDERSTAND WAS CON-
SIDERABLY LONGER THAN USUAL.

3. PRESIDENT WAS RELAXED, CORDIAL, AND CLEARLY PLEASED THAT
AMERICAN AMBASSADOR WAS AGAIN ACCREDITED TO SAO TOME. CONVERSATION
COVERED NUMBER OF SUBJECTS, NONE OF MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE IMPORTANCE.
CLOSEST WE CAME WAS IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION ABOUT RE-ESTABLISHMENT
OF REGULAR AIR SERVICE TO LIBREVILLE BY AIR GABON, WHICH ELICITED
COMMENT THAT GSTP HAD DONE ALL IT COULD DO TO IMPROVE RELATIONS
WITH GABON AND NEXT MOVE WAS UP TO GABONESE. PRESIDENT THEN
MADE RATHER SOUR REFERENCE TO SERIES OF ARTICLES THAT HAD
APPEARED RECENTLY IN LIBREVILLE PRESS ALLEGING VARIETY OF
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ARRESTS, TENSION, COUPS AND PLOTS (LIBREVILLE 0868) AND SAID
STORIES WERE COMPLETELY UNTRUE. HE FOLLOWED WITH COMMENT THAT
VOA HAD RECENTLY CARRIED ITEM REPORTING PRESENCE OF HUNDREDS
OF CUBANS IN SAO TOME WHICH HE SIMILARLY DENIED. REPORT WAS
NEWS TO ME AND OBVIOUSLY IRKED HIM. I TOLD HIM THAT IN ACT
WE HAD BEEN QUERIED RECENTLY BY JOURNALIST (UNIDENTIFIED)
CONCERNING ALLEGED PROBLEMS IN STP AND HAD DENIED KNOWLEDGE

OF ANY SUCH THING.

4. ON OTHER MATTERS, I RAISED QUESTION OF ACCREDITATION IN WASHINGTON (SEPTTEL) AND HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR OUR CURRENT AID PROGRAM FOR CROP DIVERSIFICATION WHICH HE NEVERTHELESS REFERRED TO AS A "FIRST SMALL STEP," IMPLYING THAT GSTP WOULD WELCOME CONSIDERABLE MORE ASSISTANCE. I TOLD HIM THAT I WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO PROMISE FURTHER ASSISTANCE BUT WOULD SYMPATHETICALLY CONSIDER AND TRANSMIT ANY MUTUALLY AGREED UPON PROPOSALS TO WASHINGTON. THIS LED HIM TO COMMENT THAT HE HOPED I WOULD RETURN TO SAO TOME OFTEN AND THAT HE CONSIDERED IT UP TO ME TO INDICATE TO HIM WHAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO. HE APPRECIATE OUR DESIRE TO SEND IV'S TO STATES, BUT SAID IT WAS MATTER OF SPARING INDIVIDUAL PERSONNEL TO MAKE TRIP.

5. THROUGHOUT, HE STRESSED DESIRABILITY OF FREQUENT CONTACT AND DIALOGUE TO CLEAR AWAY ANY POSSIBLE MISUNDERSTANDINGS. HE HIMSELF TRAVELS OUTSIDE OF COUNTRY TWICE A YEAR (MOST RECENTLY TO TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS WHICH HE ENJOYED). AT PRESENT GSTP'S MAJOR PROBLEM IS COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION WHICH HE ONLY REAL WINDOW THEY HAD TO OUTSIDE WORLD WAS THROUGH ANGOLA AND THIS WAS NUISANCE.

6. COMMENT: CONVERSATION WAS ANIMATED AND FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT. I HAD DISTINCT FEELING THAT PRESIDENT MADE SPECIAL EFFORT TO CONFIDENTIAL

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CONVEY GSTP DESIRE TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH US, AND A CERTAIN ANXIETY, MORE APPARENT DURING MY CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN (SEPTTEL), THAT WE NOT GUAGE OUR RELATIONS BY SOME OF THE PROGRESSIVE RHETORIC THAT EMANATES FROM GSTP FROM TIME TO TIME OR BY FORM OF GOVERNMENT THEY HAVE CHOSEN. HE AND PARTICULARLY HIS MINISTERS REPEATEDLY TOLD ME THAT I WOULD BE WELCOME AT ANY TIME AND THAT THEIR COUNTRY WAS COMPLETELY "OPEN." LATTER MAY NOT BE COMPLETELY TRUE, BUT I WAS NONETHELESS VERY STRUCK WITH MANIFEST CORDIALITY EXHIBITED BY PRESIDENT AND HIS MINISTERS.TIENKEN

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